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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a group exercise which focuses on each individual's interpersonal skills--the activity was designed to simulate a real-world group experience, such as students might encounter in the business world. The paper gives four instructional objectives, lists material required (a video camera), gives required reading for preparation, and then details the procedure to be followed. It then discusses the assignment, grading, videotape viewing procedure, the paper required, and explains "categorical intentions." (NKA)

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ED 436 801

NOT YOUR TYPICAL GROUP EXERCISE
ASSESSING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS WITHIN THE GROUP SETTING

GIFTS - Great Ideas For Teaching Speech

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CS 510 182

NOT YOUR TYPICAL GROUP EXERCISE
ASSESSING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS WITHIN THE GROUP SETTING
GIFTS - Great Ideas For Teaching Speech

PURPOSE

Most basic courses contain a section on group communication that culminates in a group presentation. While this approach does have value, it does not address the student's need to focus on his/her interpersonal skills. After A upon entering the business world most of our students will be using interpersonal skills daily and group presentations far less frequently. Additionally, in " real-world" group activities, each group member brings different knowledge to the group, and the group cannot reach a successful goal without considering as much information as possible. This activity was designed to simulate a real-world group experience.

OBJECTIVE

1. To provide students "safe space" to practice their interpersonal skills in a group setting.
2. To provide students the opportunity to observe which skills work and which do not in an interpersonal setting.
3. To allow students the opportunity to view their own interpersonal skills and suggest reasons for modifying their own behavior.
4. To simulate real world groups settings where no one person knows all of the information and the success of the team is dependent upon the participation of each group member.

MATERIAL REQUIRED

At least one video camera, and preferably two, is necessary. Students supply blank videotapes.

REQUIRED READING

In class lectures or discussion cover the group task and maintenance roles as usual. If your basic book does not identify these roles, I'd recommend a copy of the roles from *Communicating: A Social and Career Focus,* 7th edition, by Berko, Wolvin, and Wolvin. As an alternative, you may use the concept of interpersonal intent and effect. With this option, I recommend using a modified version of Bales' categorical intentions from *Interaction Process Analysis, 1950,* See copy attached.

Prior to the taping, students must read and become an expert on the article they submitted. The instructor must read all articles.

PROCEDURE

Approximately two weeks prior to the presentation date, student groups of 4-6 members select a current controversial topic for a group discussion. Students submit the topic for approval. See attached "Group Interpersonal Project" assignment that is given to students.

When the topic is approved, each student is responsible for finding a respectable printed article that deals with some aspect of the topic. I recommend journals, but many students opt for periodical and newspaper articles or book chapters. What is important is that the information in the article must be more than fluff. The instructor reserves the right to reject any submission and require a new one. The student submits one copy of the article to the instructor one week prior to the presentation date, and the student keeps the other copy and becomes "the expert" on the article. Groups are told that they cannot share articles between or among group members, and they should not discuss the topic at any point prior to their discussion date.

The instructor has one week to prepare by reading all of the submissions from each group. Since students' presentations are staggered, reading is not as much of a burden as it sounds. After reading one group's articles, the instructor develops a group goal. For example, a goal might be to develop a policy, make a recommendation, or explain the three most/least important aspects of the topic. All goals are customized depending upon the topic and the articles received, but the goal should not be attainable unless there is input from each student's article. After the development of the group goal, I generally develop 3-6 springboard questions should the students become stumped.

On the day of the presentation, each student in the presenting group is given a copy of the goal and the springboard questions. Students are given about five minutes to consider the goal and questions before going to the front of the room To facilitate the video-taping, chairs should be in a half circle. The instructor informs the audience of the group's goal, and the group is instructed to meet their goal in the next 20 - 30 minutes. The group should ignore the audience and the camera(s), as it is not a presentation to the audience. Audience members are asked to silently observe and take notes by identifying the roles they see each student take.

The group alerts the instructor as to when the goal is achieved, and then they can open the floor to the previously "invisible" audience. Audience members always have terrific topic-related comments as well as process questions.

Group members are given their tape(s). They must view them, alone or with other group members, and write an individual critique on their interpersonal skills.

GROUP INTERPERSONAL PROJECT

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to enhance your understanding of small group dynamics. to practice interpersonal communication skills. to increase your knowledge of a current issue, and to provide an opportunity to utilize your speaking skills.

The Assignment: Your group of 4 - 6 students will identify a current communication issue, and each of you will find and be responsible for knowing the content of one article on this topic. The printed piece must be in a journal, respectable periodical, newspaper, or book chapter, and have a publication date after 1993. Your group will then meet in front of the class where you will be given a question to solve or a policy to develop based on the information that you have read. The class will observe your process, but they will not be involved in it. You will be graded on your interpersonal communication skills used in the interaction. After the performance, you will view the tape and write a brief analysis of the process and critique your interpersonal skills.

You must:

- provide one copy of your article by the specified date
- have specific knowledge of the current issue based on your reading
- offer material that is new to your group
- appropriately utilize your interpersonal skills
- use language that is appropriate to the audience and occasion
- use physical behaviors that support the verbal message
- provide appropriate and timely supporting materials to help the group solve the problem
- adapt and modify your verbal and nonverbal behaviors as needed

GRADING: There will be no group grade. There will be one individual grade made up of your interpersonal skills use in the group project and a written analysis of your skills use.

THE PAPER: Alone or with the group view the videotape at least twice. On the first viewing, code each of your contributions into one of the categories below. Additionally, count the number of times each other group members speak, but don't code what they say.

- Information Giver (presenting new information, preferably with the source of your information)
- Opinion Giver
- Information Seeker by Asking Questions
- Opinion Seeker by Asking Questions
- Elaborator (giving examples for or further explaining information previously stated)
- Motivating Comments (meant as encouragement but not topic-related)
- Verifying Understanding By Paraphrasing What you Heard

- Verbal Rejection of Another or Another's Idea
- Positive Nonverbal Behavior that is clearly identified (nod, thumbs up, etc.)
- Negative Nonverbal Behavior that is clearly identified (shaking head. laugh. funny face)
- Other (explain)

On the second viewing of the tape, consider the role(s) you played in the group. Review the roles presented in the book and those that we discussed in class and use the correct terminology.

THE PAPER

In a three to five page typed, double-spaced paper review your use of interpersonal skills within the group setting. Consider the following questions as guides, not as restrictions:

- What types of interpersonal skills did you most use?
- What percentage of contributions did you give to the group compared to the other participants? What was the quality of your contributions?
- Did your communication intent match your effect?
- What group role or roles did you play? Were any of them intentional?
- What surprised you the most?
- Cite two specific changes you'd like to make in your interpersonal skills and explain how you plan to change them.

CATEGORICAL INTENTIONS: Since specific words or sentences can be used positively or negatively, it's often more important to recognize the intention behind the statement rather than the statement itself. Below are different intentions that one can have when interpersonally communicating. (Modified from R.F. Bales *Interaction Process Analysis, 1950).*

SHOWS SOLIDARITY, RAISES OTHER'S STATUS, GIVES HELP OR REWARDS, ENCOURAGES

- Solidarity: includes verbal and nonverbal greetings. departures. and phrases meant to show that the "we" is important. I.e., 'We've got quite a problem, don't we?!"
- Raises other's status: Complimenting the other
- Gives help or rewards: Offers to assist or takes on a task for the benefit of the group

SHOWS TENSION RELEASE, JOKES, LAUGHS, SHOWS SATISFACTION

- Tension release: Positive expressions of feeling better after a tense moment

POSITIVELY AGREES, SHOWS PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE, UNDERSTANDS, CONCURS, COMPLIES

GIVES SUGGESTIONS OR DIRECTIONS IN A PRODUCTIVE MANNER

- These can be posed as statements or questions
- "I think we should do it this way" vs. "What do you think about doing it this way?"

GIVES OPINION, EVALUATION, ANALYSIS, EXPRESSES FEELINGS OR WISHES

- This stage shows a deeper intellectual understanding than the previous stage and self-discloses personal information in terms of feelings or values

GIVES ORIENTATION, INFORMATION, REPEATS, CLARIFIES, CONFIRMS OR GATEKEEPER

- Gives orientation: Focuses or refocuses the group to the task issues. "We're really off topic now" or "we're supposed to come up with two solutions, right?". Acts as the gatekeeper.
- This stage assumes information is a commodity that has more value than a suggestion,
- Repeats, clarifies & confirms: All show strong listening orientation.

ASKS FOR ORIENTATION, INFORMATION, AND REPETITION

- Generally posed as a question to an individual or the group, "What do you mean by that?" "Does anyone know if that missionary can row?" "Could you repeat that?"

ASKS FOR OPINION, EVALUATION, ANALYSIS, EXPRESSION OF FEELING

- Differs from previous stage in that the speakers seeks more affective than intellectual information for expressions. feelings, and opinions or seeks a higher-level cognitive skill
- "Can you explain why you feel that way?" -Why do you prefer this option?"

ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS, DIRECTION, POSSIBLE WAYS OF ACTION

- This stage slightly differs from the preceding two in that it suggests that the speaker does not know or is at a loss. I.e., "Any ideas what we should do now?" "What would you suggest we do?"

DISAGREES, SHOWS PASSIVE REJECTION, FORMALITY, WITHHOLDS RESOURCES

- One can verbally or nonverbally disagree or reject an idea
- Showing formality when it's not warranted- acting aloof to a close friend

SHOWS TENSION, INAPPROPRIATELY ASKS FOR HELP, WITHDRAWS

- Inappropriately asking for help includes insincerity, excessive flattery, or sucking up
- Tension can be shown verbally or nonverbally

SHOWS ANTAGONISM, DEFLATES OTHER'S STATUS, DEFENDS OR ASSERTS SELF

- Attempts autocratic control or autonomy
- Seeks to lower others' status